

TOP SECRET

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Report of Interview between Colonel Smiley and Zotos

1. On November 1st Colonel Smiley accompanied by R. Gale, Passport Control Officer in Athens, visited Captain (or Major) Zotos, one of the Intelligence Officers in General Papagos's Headquarters. Zotos was the Greek officer who interrogated the Pilgrims in Athens. Colonel Smiley was introduced by Gale as Mr. Bennett and Gale as interpreter throughout the conversations.

2. The First Pilgrim Party

On October 16th two Pilgrims gave themselves up to the GNA at Sfiliates in the area of Konispol. On October 20th two more Pilgrims gave themselves up in the same area. Their names were given as:-

1. Douran Ali
2. Hamet Kouka
3. Bito Kouka
4. Isen Isouf.

COMMENT

"These men resemble closely those that we know as the Gjinokastre I Group (Bale) whose members, in addition to Ramiz Matouka, were

1. Turam Aliko
2. Ahmet Kouka
3. Bido Kuko
4. Hysen Isoufi."

They were brought down to Athens a few days later where they were thoroughly interrogated by the Greeks. Zotos had in front of him interrogation reports each about four pages long for each individual. The story told by this group was roughly as follows:-

"After landing on September 16th both groups reached the Dukati where they split. The Valona group (Bribe) had their first loss on September 20th when Sami Lepenica was killed in an ambush. He was alone at the time, having hurt his leg, and let the others of his group go ahead. On September 23rd the remaining three of this group were killed in an ambush having been betrayed by some villagers."

COMMENT

"Their names were:-

Hysen Lepenica
Safet Kapaj
Zagoll Satna

This information appears to be only hearsay from the surviving group and it must not be assumed for certain that these men were either killed outright, if killed at all."

"The Gjinokastre Group I (Bale) of whom the four survivors were members was ambushed on October 4th and the leader Ramiz Matuka was killed. After this this group made for the Greek frontier as quickly as possible."

3. The Second Pilgrim Group

On October 27th the following Pilgrims gave themselves up to the GNA Pagoni. near Gjinokastre.

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COPY 1 OF 1
256

TOP SECRET

- 2 -

Their names were given as:-

1. Tzemal Aslan
2. Ali Tzafer
3. Aki Gaba
4. Anko Daughti
5. Bardouli Berdesi
6. Baloum Senai.

COMMENT

"These names with one exception correspond to the Gjinokastre II (Bomb) Group whose names were as follows:-

1. Xhemal Asllanaj
2. Arif Khaferi
3. Haki Baba
4. Ago Dauti
5. Bardhul Gerveshi.

The sixth man was not an original member of this group. He could either be

(a) a stray Pilgrim picked up by the party or,

(b) Pellumpi Sina, who landed at the same time, but who was intended to be a member of the Korca Group I (BEAN)."

The story told by this group was that after landing on October 6th both they and the Korca Group I (Bean) proceeded together as far as the area of Tepelene. There they separated. Bomb group going South and Bean going East. When they heard there was going to be a military movement against them, and fearing reprisals would be brought against villages who helped them, they decided to cross over into Greece. They made no contact by wireless and, in fact, buried it.

COMMENT

"Bean has since been in contact with Valour and has been given permission to cross the frontier to Greece as it is being chased."

4. Both parties brought out certain amount of gold. The first party had a hundred and sixty five sovereigns, the second had between thirty to forty sovereigns per man. They also brought out their false identity documents. The Pilgrims at present are accommodated in a house but under guard. They were asked if they wished to go out and all refused, stating they wished to remain where they were until receiving orders from Albert.

5. Zotos made the following comments on the two groups. The first group (Bale) were in very low spirits and are still very windy. The morale of the second group is high and they have already volunteered to return. Zotos stated that both groups alleged that the Communists are now recruiting and arming local villagers as a force to operate against guerillas. Furthermore, the Communists are sending groups of agents-provocateurs in British battle-dress into the mountains in order to mislead the villagers who will then give themselves away as being anti-Government.

The following interesting information from his own sources was volunteered by Captain Zotos who took much persuading to make him believe that agents put in by the Italians are NOT being put in in collaboration with the British.

He stated that twenty one men were recently recruited in Greece and Italy by Kirkos on behalf of Shefqet Verlaci. Of these twenty one, five men including Etem Chaku and Metan Lushanaka were dropped by parachute in July.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

- 3 -

It was alleged that one or two Anglo-Saxons were with them. This party was all captured by Communists and four of them were executed. Etem Chaku, after being in custody some time was permitted to escape. He is now in the mountains receiving supply drops (he received two drops of 28 containers on October 17th and October 18th). The Communists helped him to collect supplies!! Of the remaining sixteen men an attempt was made to infiltrate them by sea early in September. This failed and they returned to Italy. On October 14th, sixteen men were infiltrated by sea in the area of Saranda. Zotos insists that these sixteen are not repeat not the same sixteen who made the attempt the previous month.

Zotos stated it was a great pity we did not work together more, particularly on the question of landing points. He quoted as an example our first landing which took place at the same point where ten days previously he had landed five of his own men (three were killed, two returned to Greece). It was also in this area that Verlaci's first sixteen attempted to land in September.

He stated that from his own sources he has heard that most of the resistance and sabotage in Albania is stirred up by Tito's agents who are Kossovars who cross the frontier for short periods and then return to Yugoslavia. The only question he asked me was on the subject of our collaboration with the Italians and was extremely surprised (if he believed it at all) that we did not do so. He alleged he had not asked these questions but Gale who had previously interviewed Zotos and seen the interrogation reports on his desk distinctly saw the names of British Officers. It can be safely assumed that he has full details of their training and infiltration, in fact he had earlier stated that the Pilgrims spoke very freely. It may be noted that they gave their real names and not the false ones with which we sent them.

TOP SECRET